



## Helping America 2021

Today's challenges are strenuous.

Our people, 23 million of them, have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Our people, countless of them, are on the verge of eviction or currently homeless due to eviction.

Our people, 6.7% of them, are jobless.

Today's strenuous challenges have left people searching for miracles, praying in hope, and crying for help. Already struggling to fight against systematic racism, 9.9% of Blacks are unemployed in the United States—that's 75% higher than Whites. Imagine how fatiguing it is on single mothers to raise youth on their own. Imagine how burdensome it is on fathers, with today's strenuous challenges, to bring bread home for their families. Regardless, if you or I can relate, it's righteous to act.

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Thus, today's challenges will entail ample action. Thus, ample action that will help people and their families keep their living, afford groceries, save their credit, and alleviate long-term effects of the pandemic.

- **Ordinances to Preserve Life, Prevent Evictions and Repossessions**

On September 1, 2020 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued the *Temporary Halt in Residential Evictions to Prevent the Further Spread of COVID-19* (Order). The Order went into effect on September 4, 2020, and was extended on December 27, 2021. However, this is not enough, considering some landlords are still pursuing evictions.

- Ordinances to require Landlords and Mortgage companies to accept partial or split payments throughout the month, or allow renters to pay 70% of the monthly rent without penalty or eviction.
- Ordinances to give tenants seven additional days to pay rent beyond the Landlord's current policy, before an eviction notice is provided to tenant, or eviction filed.
- 2% tax cut to Landlords and Mortgage companies that give their tenants a COVID-19 relief discount or 4% tax cut to Landlords that give their tenants two month relief of rent for a COVID-19 related hardship.
- Ordinances to require Lienholders to provide at least two deferments, if the lessee sends a hardship letter to the lienholder. A letter can be requested for each deferment.

- **Ordinances to Alleviate Incarceration for Minor Offenses**

As of the roughly 329,000 reported COVID-19 cases behind bars, slightly over 2,000 prisoners have lost their life to the disease. Based on a report from the Prison Policy Initiative, 1 in 5 incarcerated people are

locked up for a drug offense. Unprecedentedly, 470,000 people—including 16,000 youth—were detained in local jails because they couldn't afford the bail for their release.

- Ordinances that restrict incarceration for non-violent, minor, misdemeanors.
- Ordinances that release DUI arrestees after six hours, if they can pass a sobriety test performed by jail officers and not a risk to society.
- Ordinances that legalize marijuana, and allow local and federal government to install an income tax on the sale of marijuana—for both individuals and businesses.

- **Laws to Encourage Higher Education, Yet Lower Debt**

It's estimated that 43 million Americans have student debt, in which accounts to \$1.6 trillion in student loan debt. In perspective, there has been a decline of more than 200,000 black students enrolling in undergraduate studies at public colleges. This statistic shows that Black people are unprivileged, and discouraged by the cost and debt that transpires from pursuing higher education. This disparity will only increase, if no action is taken.

- Establish an Education Debt Consolidation program for Masters or Doctorate degrees which allow low interest rates and extended time for the student to pay debt, without penalty.
- Establish an Education Debt Deduction program for Associates and Bachelors degrees. This program would encourage 20% debt deduction for Associates degrees, and 30% for Bachelors degrees.
- Provide tax cuts to companies that pay at least 25% of their employee's tuition.

- **Policies to Eliminate Police Brutality and Build Community Trust**

In the United States, there were 1,127 people killed by police in 2020. Of those people, 28% of them were Black—despite Black people only being 13% of the U.S. population. In perspective, 7 of the 100 largest city police departments kill black men at higher rates than the U.S. murder rate. More so, police killed Black people at higher rates than white people in 47 of the 50 largest U.S. cities.

- Increase diversity in Police departments by hiring 25% more Black officers.
- Provide semi-annual mental health evaluations for officers who work/patrol in highly populated black communities.
- Provide annual diversity training for all officers.
- Revise and strengthen local police department use of force policies, such as, but not limited to:
  - ❖ Restrict officers from using deadly force unless all reasonable alternatives have been exhausted;
  - ❖ Have first aid kits and immediately render medical assistance to anyone in police custody who is injured or who complains of an injury;
  - ❖ Prohibit police officers from shooting at moving vehicles or fleeing suspects;
  - ❖ Prohibit police officers from engaging in high-speed chases of people who have not committed a violent crime or felony;
  - ❖ Prohibit the use of chokeholds, strangleholds (i.e. carotid restraints), hog-tying, and transporting people face-down in a vehicle;
  - ❖ Prohibit the use of force on a person for talking back or as a punishment for running away or recording the incident;

- ❖ Prohibit officers from taking possession of people's phone, until the person is arrested to be charged with an incarcerated offense.
- ❖ Establish a one-strike system for officers who use deadly force without justification, and a two-strike system for officers who use excessive force. This system should be transparent and available for public access.
- ❖ Establish a community committee that reviews police excessive use complaints, comprised of diverse local leaders and civilians.
- ❖ Create a community seminar at local high schools and communities on de-escalation with police. This seminar gives police departments the opportunities to show transparency, educate, and build trust.

- **Policies to Decrease Homelessness**

According to statistics, 1 in 2 of homeless people are unsheltered. In 2019, 343,187 men were homeless, 219,911 women were homeless, 3,255 transgender were homeless, and 1,362 gender non-conforming people were homeless. Realistically, those numbers are likely higher in today's current time. The solution to eliminating homelessness is considerable, yet possible through consistent, inclusive and solid policies.

- Increase temporary housing facilities and beds.
- Increase or establish job assistance and trade job training at temporary housing facilities.
- Establish policies that require transportation of homeless people to a local temporary housing location, if they are not charged with an arrestable offense.
- Create an abandonment law of an LGBTQ youth to be determined as a hate crime.
- Increase minimum wage.
- Enact policies for housing affordability, to ensure rent is consistent with local average income ratios.

As leaders, and people, we have shared responsibility to help and progress America. In times, like now, the unity between society and government is potent. The issues at hand don't have simple solutions, but united, **resolutions can be aspired**. This letter was informative, but also an urgent cry for legislative action on the issues that affect our people.

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Yours,



**Keandre' Curry**

Author, Motivational Speaker, Social Advocate

[www.KeandreCurry.com](http://www.KeandreCurry.com)

[Questions@KeandreCurry.com](mailto:Questions@KeandreCurry.com)

(864) 674-7328

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